

TITLE

ADAPTIVE SADDLE WITH SUPPORT ASSEMBLY

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

5 This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/428,040 filed November 21, 2002.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

 The present invention relates generally to horse saddles and in particular to an
10 adaptive saddle and support assembly for use with handicapped, disabled, and injured riders.

 The therapeutic benefits of horseback riding to those in the population who are handicapped, disabled or injured are well known. Saddles for use with handicapped, disabled, and injured riders are also well known. Some horse stables and trainers specialize in the physical training and therapy of handicapped, disabled, and injured riders. Many
15 saddles, however, are designed only for quadriplegic riders, while other saddles are designed only for paraplegic riders, and still other saddles are designed only for riders with slight trunk control, etc. In addition, many of these saddles may not be used with riders of varied disabilities or may not be used so without great difficulty. Often only a single horse or a small group of horses at a stable has the correct temperament for carrying disabled riders. If
20 the single horse or group of horses is used with many riders of varied disabilities, the various saddles must be disadvantageously changed each time a rider having a different disability is changed. In addition, it is expensive to purchase and maintain the numerous types of support saddles and the like on hand.

 It is desirable, therefore, to provide a saddle and support assembly that may be
25 adapted for use with riders of varied disabilities.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

 The present invention concerns an adaptive saddle and support assembly for use with handicapped, disabled, and injured riders. The adaptive saddle and support assembly
30 includes a saddle body having a first attachment point and a second attachment point. The

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring now to Fig. 1, an adaptive saddle for use with handicapped, disabled, and injured riders in accordance with the present invention is indicated generally at **10**. The adaptive saddle **10** includes a saddle body **12** having a pommel **14** at a front portion of the saddle body **12**, a cantle **16** at a rear portion of the saddle body **12**, and a pair of stirrups **18** (only one can be seen) extending downwardly from the saddle body **12**. The saddle **10** is preferably a modified commercially available conventional horse saddle or the like. Adjacent the pommel **14** is mounted a first or front attachment point **20** and adjacent the cantle **16** is mounted a second or rear attachment point **22**.

Referring now to Fig. 2, a support assembly is indicated generally at **24** mounted at the front attachment point **20**. The support assembly **24** is adapted to be selectively and releasably attached to either of the attachment points **20** and **22** on the saddle body **12** to form the adaptive saddle and support assembly **10**. The support assembly **24** includes a generally vertical support member **26** that is releasably attached to the first attachment point **20** of the saddle body **12** at a first or lower end **28** thereof. The support member **26** can be constructed of steel or a material having similar material strength. Preferably, the support member **26** is tubular in construction to provide material strength but reduce the weight of the support member **26**. A trunk pad **32** is removably and adjustably attached adjacent to a second or upper end **30** of the support member **26**. A transverse frame member **34** having opposed ends **36** is removably attached perpendicular to the support member **26** intermediate the first end **28** and the second end **30**. The trunk pad **32** and the frame member **34** can be advantageously moved along the length of the support member **26** to accommodate riders (not shown) of varying heights. An arm member **38** is releasably attached to, extends forwardly from and may rotate upwardly or outwardly from each end **36** of the frame member **34**. Each arm member **38** can include a forearm pad **40** releasably and rotatably attached thereto. The forearm pads **40** may be advantageously rotated 360° about a longitudinal axis of the respective arm member **38**, depending on the needs of the rider. The forearm pad **40** includes a handgrip assembly **42** adjustably and releasably attached thereto and extending outwardly therefrom. Alternatively, the handgrip assembly **42** is adjustably

and releasably attached to a respective free end of the arm member 38 without the use of the forearm pad 40.

Figs. 3 and 4 show an alternate embodiment adaptive saddle 10' including a headrest member 44 removably and adjustably attached to the second end 30 of the support member 26'. The headrest member 44 can be advantageously moved upwardly and downwardly along the length of the support member 26' and the forearm pad 40 can be advantageously moved along the length of the arm member 38 when determining the need and placement of the support 24' on the saddle body 12 for each rider.

Referring now to Fig. 3, a rear view of the alternative embodiment of the adaptive saddle 10' is shown. The rear attachment point 22 preferably includes a base portion 50 attached to the saddle body 12 by a plurality of fasteners 52. An attachment portion 54 extends upwardly from the base portion 50 and includes an open upper end for receiving the first or lower end 28 of the support member 26'. The attachment portion 54 is attached to the cantle 16 by a plurality of fasteners 56. Preferably, the first end 28 of the support member 26' includes a plurality of spaced apart transverse bores (not shown) extending through opposing sides thereof for selectively receiving a pin 58. The transverse holes and the pin 58 permit the height of the support member 26' to be adjusted when determining the need and placement of the support assembly 24' on the saddle body 12 for each rider. The first attachment point 20 is preferably similar in construction to the second attachment point 22 shown in Fig. 3.

The support member 26' also preferably includes a plurality of spaced apart transverse bores 60 extending front to back therethrough. A spring-biased pin 62 extends through a lower portion of an attachment member 32a of the trunk pad 32. The pin 62 cooperates with the bores 60 to allow the trunk pad 32 to be adjusted vertically when determining the need and placement of the support 24' on the saddle body 12 for each rider. An upper end of the attachment member 32a includes a handwheel 63 attached thereto, discussed in more detail below.

The opposed ends 36 of the frame member 34 each preferably include a spring biased pin 64 disposed therein that cooperate with spaced apart longitudinal bores (not shown) extending through the ends of the arm members 38 that cooperate with the opposed ends of

the frame member 34. The pins 64 cooperate with the bores in the arm members 38 to allow the arm members 38 to be adjusted inwardly and outwardly with respect to the trunk pad 32 when determining the need and placement of the support assembly 24' on the saddle body 12 for each rider.

5 The support member 26' is formed as an elongated U-shaped support bar 66 having an upper portion attached to a rear portion of the headrest 44 by a plurality of fasteners 68 and including a pair of legs 66a extending downwardly from the upper portion. The legs 66a of the support bar 66 are disposed between a rear surface of the trunk pad 32 and a forward surface of the frame member 34. Preferably, the legs 66a of the support bar 66 are
10 releasably secured to the rear surface of the trunk pad 32 by a flange (not shown) that cooperates with an interior surface (not shown) of the handwheel 63. Turning the handwheel 63 clockwise secures the legs 66a between the respective opposing surfaces of the flange and the trunk pad 32. When the handwheel 63 is in an unsecured position, the legs 66a slide between the opposing surfaces of the flange and the trunk pad 32 such that the
15 headrest 44 may be adjusted vertically with respect to the trunk pad 32. In order to remove the headrest 44, the handwheel 63 is turned counterclockwise and the headrest 44 and support bar 66 are removed from the trunk pad 32.

Referring now to Fig. 4, a front view of the assembled adaptive saddle 10' is shown having a pair of forearm pad assemblies 40a. Each of the forearm pad assemblies 40a
20 includes a generally L-shaped support bar 70 that is adjustably and removably attached to the arm members 38. A lower portion of the each of the support bars 70 extends below and substantially perpendicular to the arms 38 while an upper portion of the support bar extends substantially parallel to the arms 38 but is spaced vertically above the arms 38. Preferably, the support bar 70 is attached to the arm member 38 by a clamp 72 that is actuated by a
25 handwheel 76. The handwheel 76 actuates and releases the clamp 72 to allow the clamp 72 to be moved and located along the length of the arm 38 or to be completely removed from the arm 38.

A spring-biased release button 74 on an outer portion of the clamp 72 includes a rod (not shown) extending therefrom that cooperates with a plurality of bores (not shown)
30 extending through or indentations (not shown) formed in the lower portion of the support bar

70, which allows for vertical adjustment of the support bar 70. A handwheel 78 attaches a clamping assembly 80 on the upper portion of the support bar 70. The clamping assembly 80 includes the forearm pad and assembly 40a attached thereto. The handwheel 78 allows for longitudinal adjustment of the forearm pad and assembly 40a along the upper portion of the support bar 70 and for 360° rotation of the forearm pad and assembly 40a. A handwheel 82 includes a rod (not shown) extending therefrom that cooperates with a plurality of bores (not shown) extending through or indentations (not shown) formed in a portion of a handgrip assembly 84 received by an open end of the clamping assembly 80. The handwheel 82 allows for length adjustment of the handle assembly 84 with respect to the open end of the clamping assembly 80.

The adaptive saddles 10 and 10' are extremely versatile and may be adapted to be used for a number of riders of varying handicaps or injuries while allowing the saddle body 12 to remain on a single horse (not shown). The adaptive saddle 10 or 10' may be advantageously customized in a great number of ways when determining the need and placement of the support assembly 24 or 24' on the saddle body 12 for each rider. For example, the adaptive saddle 10 or 10' can be used for a rider (not shown) who has minimal head and trunk control by attaching the support assembly 24 or 24' to the first attachment point 20 and attaching the trunk pad 32, the frame member 34, the arm members 38, the forearm pad 40 and the handgrip assembly 42 to the support member 26 or 26' best seen in Fig. 2.

The adaptive saddle 10 or 10' can also be used for a rider (not shown) who has obtained enough trunk control that the frame member 34, the arm members 38, and the forearm pads 40 or the forearm assemblies 40a may be removed while keeping the support member 26 or 26' the trunk pad 32, and the headrest 44 attached to the second attachment point 22 to provide support to the rider.

The adaptive saddle 10 or 10' can also be used for a rider who needs support for one arm only by removing one of the arm members 38 from the frame member 34. The adaptive saddle 10 or 10' can also be used for a rider who does not need head support by removing the headrest 44 from the adaptive saddle and support assembly. The adaptive saddle 10 or 10' may also be used for a rider who does not need forearm support by removing the forearm

pads **40** or forearm assemblies **40a** from the arms **38**. If the rider needs only back support, the arms **38** may be removed and the trunk pad **32** and the headrest **44** or the trunk pad **32** only remain attached to the saddle body **12**. The handgrip assemblies **42** and **84** could be adapted to be attached to the free ends of the arms **38** for those riders whose needs warrant
5 only handgrip support.

Alternatively, an elbow pad (not shown) is attached to each of the arm members **38**, for those riders who need less support than that provided by the forearm pads **40** or the forearm pad assemblies **40a**. The elbow pads can include the handgrip assembly **42** or **84** adjustably and releasably attached thereto and extending outwardly therefrom.

10 The adaptive saddle **10** and **10'** can also be used for a rider (not shown) who has obtained the strength to hold his or her head high and hold his or her trunk in a more upright position. This is done by attaching the support assembly **24** or **24'** to the second attachment point **22** and attaching the trunk support pad **32**, the frame member **34**, the arm members **38**, and the elbow pads to the support member **26** or **26'**.

15 Those skilled in the art will realize that utilizing the same adaptive saddle **10** and **10'** is advantageous to many riders and the adaptive saddle according to the present invention may also accommodate this by simply removing the entire support **24** or **24'** from the saddle body **12** and placing a cap cover (not shown) over the first attachment point **20** and the second attachment point **22**, best seen in Fig. 1. In this configuration, the saddle body **12**
20 may be used as a standard saddle without requiring any portion of the support assembly **24** and **24'** to be attached to either of the attachment points **20** and **22**.

The therapeutic benefits of horseback riding to those in the population who are handicapped, disabled or injured are well known. The adaptive saddle **10** and **10'** and the support assembly **24** or **24'** in accordance with the present invention provide a means for
25 providing a number of riders of varying disabilities the ability to ride a horse and take advantage of these known therapeutic benefits. Prior to the use of the adaptive saddle **10** and **10'** each rider is evaluated to determine the need and placement of the support assembly **24** or **24'** on the saddle body **12** in order to configure the assembly that provides the best overall support in order to promote the rider's independence.

In accordance with the provisions of the patent statutes, the present invention has been described in what is considered to represent its preferred embodiment. However, it should be noted that the invention can be practiced otherwise than as specifically illustrated and described without departing from its spirit or scope.